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ABSTRACT

Trends in nursing research in Sweden are first discussed in relation to nursing education. Beyond the university, two "roots" of nursing research are investigated: (1) The first studies included analysis of the working conditions of nursing care; and (2) Later research topics covered nurse-patient relations and patients' needs. The research project also involved analyzing the relations between practitioners' work and that of researchers. Both practical experience and theoretical distance are necessary for the critical assessment of nursing routines that are an important category of nursing research. Several kinds of theory in nursing research are mentioned, such as theories relating to normative models of nursing care. At the end of the 1970s, nursing research was intended to be holistic and oriented to patients and practitioners. In this period, discussions were held about different views of man, and definitions of health, sickness, and criteria of good care. Recently, the paradigmatic discussions have grown to be oriented to theory and method. Currently, there is an increasing concern with clinical work. Hopefully nursing research is developing around problems involved in caring for patients. (SW)

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CONCLUDED PROJECT

TITLE OF PROJECT

IDEOLOGIES AND RESEARCH IN NURSING CARE,
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CONDUCTED AT

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INTRODUCTION

In 1977 several vocational education programmes were added to the system of higher education. This implies new demands for the relation of teaching and curricula to research. The main goal is to enable the students to read and critically use scientific reports, not to turn them into scientists.

Research has also been used as a paradigm for teaching and learning. One alternative is to use theoretical-normative models for nursing care as structuring elements in curricula, the main example being the use of system models in nursing care and in nursing education. This has been quite common in nursing care in the US and in nursing education in the US and Sweden.

Another alternative is to use a 'scientific approach' in solving practitioners' problems. Different theoretical systems are avoided, attention focussing instead

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on a critical analysis of problems in clinical care. The best known example of this approach is the medical and nursing education at Mac Master in Canada.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF NURSING RESEARCH IN SWEDEN

Besides the university reform, there are two different roots of nursing research in Sweden. One is external conditions: the changes in medical and nursing care, the accelerating growth of expenditures, tendencies for nurses to become professionalized. The other is an interest in nursing care per se as a research field. The first studies included analysis of the working conditions of nursing care; this has been subsequently extended to include nursing-patient relations and, recently, patients' needs, knowledge and life.

Up till now only a few nurses have taken doctoral degrees, and as until recently there have been no nursing research departments at the universities, their degrees have been in medicine, sociology, education, etc. This early phase was greatly influenced by nursing research in the US and United Kingdom. In this build-up period a lot of effort has been devoted to making a scientific approach more familiar and accepted in nursing schools and to arranging courses whereby nurses could qualify for doctoral studies. To this end, and besides the present research project, we (= the leaders of the study reported here) have lectured on different research traditions and methods.

An interesting part of our research has involved analysing the relations between practitioners' work, which is action-oriented, steered by routines and, in important cases, by good judgement and experience, and research work, which is more related to explanations, specific and delimited problems, and need for knowledge to fulfil certain criteria of credibility

and generalizability. The theoretical 'distance' in research work is liable to detach it from practice, and special efforts are necessary to keep it in touch with clinical problems. On the other hand, both practical experience and theoretical distance are necessary for the critical assessments of nursing routines which are an important category of nursing research.

THEORIES IN NURSING RESEARCH

There are several kinds of theory in nursing research: Theories relating to normative models of nursing care, which we discuss very briefly. Explanatory related theories which are often taken from the social sciences (Maslow theories of human needs, theories of personal development etc). In theories of patients' coping behaviour, psychological and systems theories are combined. There are also theories on a meta level related to the development of new approaches and methods. Systems theory has been important also on this level, guiding 'processes' in 'care systems' and 'nursing education systems'. We are critical of the widespread use of systems thinking. Nursing decisions cannot be formalized to that extent; a theory of regulation and control cannot include personal development and relations. On the level of new methods and approaches, we also briefly describe 'discovery of grounded theory' and humanistic-hermeneutic approaches.

THE 'PARADIGM' AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF NURSING RESEARCH

At the end of the seventies, nursing research was intended to be holistic, patient- and practitioner-oriented, in contrast to medical research, which was considered atomistic, and as dealing mostly with the sick organs only. In this period a lot of important discussions were held about different views of man, biological versus humanistic approaches, definitions of health, sickness and criteria of good care.

In the last few years the paradigmatic discussions have grown to be more theory and method- oriented. Different approaches such as 'positivism', hermeneutics and systems theory are no longer seen as conflicting; instead the approaches are chosen and modified according to the character of the problems. In some few cases, different approaches are compared (which calls for an accurate methodology), for instance in a project in which the development of a kind of muscular weakening from a medical point of view is compared with the patients' experiences and (psycho-social) acceptance of their sickness. Both these factors must be considered, for instance, when choosing handicap aids.

Nursing research is in changing from a very inchoate, multidisciplinary field to a more independent discipline. A scientific discipline may in many cases be described as a unique combination of background knowledge in the field of study, problems, empirical matter and methods. This is not the case in nursing research, and probably it will always be necessary to use a wide range of methods and theories. But there is now an increasing concern with clinical work (and the antithesis to medical research is no longer needed), so that nursing research, one hopes, is developing around problems involved in taking care of the patients. In Sweden the expression 'nursing care' is avoided as several kinds of staff are involved and changes are in progress towards a more patient-oriented medical care. One indicator of an independent new field of research is the existence of a research community, with its pioneers, conferences, newsletters and journals.

Göran Wallén

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SOME MAIN REPORTS

Jan Bärmark, Aant Elzinga & Göran Wallén *Nursing care research*, Report no 127, Department of Theory of Science, University of Gothenburg, 1981. (Also presented at a joint International Sociology of Science/Parex meeting in Austria 1980.)

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